

Catherine S. Ritchie
55 Canoe Hill Road
New Canaan, Connecticut 06840

October 13, 1995

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

95101285

Dear Mr. Hunt

I object to all
the violence on TV for my
grand children.

Please see that
1) there is one hour of
children's programming daily
and
2) that it is ~~educational~~
and entertaining.

Sincerely
Catherine Ritchie

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

21 General St
Somerset, Ma. 02726
October 1, 1995

Federal Communications Commission
1919 M. ST. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

95100140

Dear Sir,

I am very concerned about
the repeated episodes of violence
in children's T.V. programs.
Children are our most
valued and cherished
treasures. Let us adults
act responsibly to protect what
they cannot do for themselves.

Please see Docket #
mm -93-48.

Sincerely yours,
Mary Louise Ryder
(Mrs. C.E. Ryder, Jr.)

RECEIVED
OCT 11 10 25 AM '95

95100402

October 23, 1995
Susan Maiello
11817 Wayland Street
Oakton, Va 22124

RECEIVED

OCT 24 1995

FCC MAIL ROOM

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

ABC

Dear Secretary,

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

As an educator and parent I am very concerned about the quality of television being offered to the public. I am noticing a higher level of debasing language and subject matter. Adult material is being offered at an earlier hour featuring inappropriate language and constant sexual innuendo. I am concerned for the youth of our country if this is to be the fare offered over the air waves. Personally, I am turning off the television more and more in favor of reading, but am very worried about the unsupervised television viewing that is going on in many households and the long term effect it will have upon our children, culture and country.

I strongly support the development of a "Contract for Kids and Community," with relicensing contingent upon living up to the agreement. I also support at least one hour of educational programming between 7-10 p.m. Every television should come equipped with computer chips to block out violence and trash.

I urge you to support programming that is uplifting to our children and culture. I urge you to make it very difficult for broadcasters to offer a constant diet of smut and violence.

Sincerely,

Susan Maiello

RECEIVED
OCT 24 3 25 PM '95
FCC MAIL ROOM

10-12-95

Mr. Reed Hundt

I'm writing this letter to express my feelings about the quality of children's TV programming. Children need to be taught values of what is right & what is wrong - and, most importantly self-control. Education should be aired as a "significant purpose" - Shows should ideally be aired 24 hours. I realize a lot of people would object to that, so maybe just between prime time for children like 4pm - 10pm. Stations should provide written statements ~~that~~ about themes - educational objectives and what child audiences are targeted by the programming.

Our children are the most important group of individuals who imitate what they see - if all they see is violence, sex controversy, obscene language, and people fighting - then they grow immune to the "rightness" of morals; - They begin to live their life as if these things are OK and ~~that~~ ^{they} are not!

You know as well as I do, too

many parents, baby-sitters, and yes, even ~~teachers~~ teachers use the TV to occupy children's interests. — So why not at least make it educational.

In today's society, it is so unfortunate that we see grown ^{children} ~~adults~~ committing horrendous crimes.

No self-control — people walking in a building and killing everyone.

Children are even killing their whole families. — Why? It would be wonderful if every child got the individual attention they needed while growing up. If I feel the TV is very important in some people's lives, so therefore it should have respectable standards.

I recently watched Cinemax late at night & I was deplored at their quality of programming. What if a child woke up because he was frightened in the middle of night, didn't want to wake his parents and turned on the TV? Hopefully, it would be the cartoon station, and hopefully it would be educational cartoons not violent ones.

A concerned parent

10 Live Oak Road
Norwalk, CT. 06857

October 12, 1995

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Reed Hundt, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 Main N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Mr. Hundt,

As a teacher, parent, and
grandparent I am greatly
concerned with the quality
of T.V. viewing available
for young people.

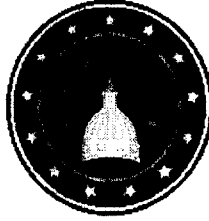
I urge you to approve
legislation providing for at
least an hour of children's
TV daily. The programs should
be both educational and
entertaining.

I am sure that you are
aware of the amount of violence
and inappropriate programs
for young people that is
available currently on T.V.

Please consider quality
TV for our young people.
Thank you.

Sincerely,
Rosaria Konstantin

House of Representatives



Speaker
Paul S. Mannweiler

State of Indiana
109th General Assembly

Principal Clerk
Lynn Dennis

HOUSE CONFERENCE COMMITTEE MEETING

HB 1772 **Date:** 04/26/1995 **Time:** 11:00 AM **Place:** 156-B

House Chairperson: *M. Young* **House Conferees:** *Fry*

Senate Conferees: *Harrison, Antich*

Bill Author: *M. Young* **Subject Matter:** *Medical service providers.*

Schedule Notes: *House Advisors: T. Brown/Kruzan*

Posting Date & Time: *Wednesday, April 26, 1995 8:55 AM*

October 11, 1995

The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chair
The Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Sir

I am writing in reference to the Children's Television Act (CTA). I am a strong supporter of this act as it was intended NOT AS IT HAS BEEN ENFORCED!

The CTA required broadcasters to serve the educational and informational needs of children... I see little evidence of that in normal tv viewing with the exception of PBS.

I would like to see education tv offered on a daily basis, more even than the FCC proposed five hours per week. Five hours doesn't begin to address the amount of time some children spend in front of the tv. I also don't believe that any tv offered before 7 am and after 9 pm should be considered educational and informational toward fulfilling the obligation toward children. Personally, I would NOT object to four hours A DAY, say between 4 and 8 pm, being educational.

Educational and informational does not include the vast majority of cartoons. Obviously, if stations are allowed to include cartoons like The Jetsons and Flintstones as educational, the definition needs to be redefined. I have no objection to either of these cartoons, but let's call a spade a spade. It's purely entertainment.

Examples of programming I DO NOT find educational, and DO NOT allow my three children to watch, include almost everything on network tv after 9am. To be more explicit...in Indianapolis, for the week beginning October 8th, Sunday: ABC after 5 pm, CBS after 2 pm, NBC after 7 pm; on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: ABC, CBS or NBC after 9 am; on Tuesday: ABC after 9 am, CBS after 9 am until 4 pm and after 5 pm, NBC after 9 am. By contrast my children are allowed to watch any programming on PBS at any time. The majority of programming on our local tv, Channel 4, is acceptable to me, although, again, I do not believe it constitutes educational or informational. Saturdays: I do not object to the cartoons and I applaud shows like Bill Nye the Science Guy, At the Zoo, The Brain Game (the latter two are both locally produced shows). However, Saturday programming after 10 or 11 am offers nothing worthwhile for children with the exception of Dr. Quinn - the issues dealt with are understandable by children even as young as my five year old. I also wish Touched by an Angel were shown earlier. Nine to 10 pm is too late for children under 9-11 years old to be up.

~~Attached are copies of our weekly tv shows for your reference.~~

My 8yr. old just reminded how much she enjoys cable at grandma's because she can watch I Love Lucy, I Dream of Jeannie & Brady Bunch & Highway to Heaven

Julianne Van Wyk
501 Buckingham Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 46208
317/931-1634

please excuse the yellow paper - ran out of time to get to a copy store

21666 Welch
Northville, Michigan 48167
October 11, 1995

The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chair
The Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Chairman Hunt:

On behalf of my children, I encourage you and your committee to vote for a required minimum of educational and informational programming. Quality TV programs are an extremely effective and powerful medium for education, and our children deserve their share of the public airwaves.

Sadly, for thirty years the broadcasting industry has, for the most part, taken advantage of a voluntary market at the expense of our children. As a parent, I can only select good programming for my children when good programming is offered. My children and the children of this country need the FCC to advocate for them. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Flis".

Barbara Flis

cc: PTA
Office of Governmental Relations

713 Woodfield Drive
Cincinnati, OH 45231-2639

October 3, 1995

The Honorable Reed Hundt, Chair
The Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Mr. Hundt:

I am writing to you in regards to children's television programming whose fate lies in the hands of five public officials who serve as key decision makers on the Federal Communication Commission. These five people on October 16th will vote whether to require TV stations to produce at least one hour of educational and informational programming per day or seven hours per week or to vote against what virtually every parent is demanding: "a clean up of the airwaves!"

While parents share responsibility for what their children watch, they cannot do the job themselves. The market has not responded to providing more and better children's programming, and parents need the active help of the FCC to improve TV quality.

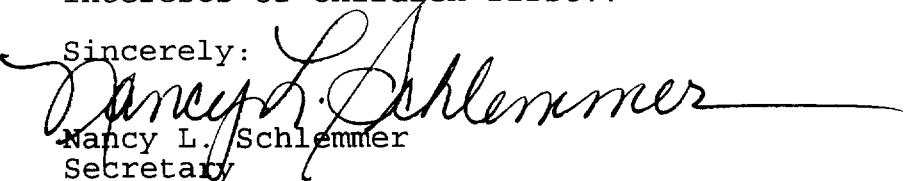
I have enclosed an editorial that appeared in today's *Cincinnati Enquirer* which states: **TURN OFF - New season needs a warning: "TV Land is no place for kids"**. In the article, (which I sincerely hope that you read) I believe has stated what is of utmost concern for all parents, "get rid of the sludge that is now being broadcast in what used to be the family hours from 8 to 10 p.m."

TV stations must be held accountable for the impact they are having on the children of this nation. When major stations such as ABC, NBC and CBS over a 38 week period, devoted 1,392 minutes to the O.J. Simpson trial and only 762 to Bosnia and 530 to the Oklahoma City bombing, which I find appalling, I think it's time that we take a real hard look at what is happening to TV programming and what our children are subjected to watching.

The Federal Communications Act of 1933 says that the TV airwaves belong to the public. Children's Television Act defines "public" as including "children and youth". CTA does not attempt to ban programs, it merely requires the industry to include children in their programming in exchange for receiving a license.

I sincerely hope that when the FCC makes its decision on October 16th that it will be in the best interest of children and not to those whose sole interest is the dollar sign. We must strive to put the interests of children first!!

Sincerely:

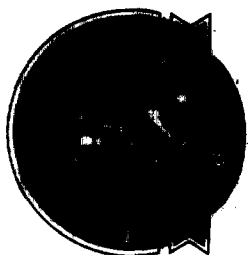

Nancy L. Schlemmer
Secretary
National PTA

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OCT 12 10 37 AM '95

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

EDITORIAL BOARD:

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TONY LANG Editorial writer
RAY COOKLIS Editorial writer

A Gannett Newspaper

Turn off

New season needs a warning: 'TV Land is no place for kids'

We pause now for a public service announcement for parents: "It's 8 p.m. — do you know where your children are?"

Some of the stuff they could be watching on TV is bad enough to make moms and dads miss the good old days when parents only had to worry about kids wandering the streets, stealing hubcaps.

Here are some true tales from the TV listings, to indicate the kind of rank sludge that is now being broadcast in what used to be the family hours, from 8 to 10 p.m.:

► **Friends:** While baby-sitting his son, Ross expresses his displeasure when Phoebe tastes Carol's breast milk to check the temperature.

► **Grace Under Fire:** Grace has a new boyfriend . . . the boss!

► **The Naked Truth:** Is Nora having Elvis' baby?

► **New York Undercover:** When Cooper's daughter is lured into the clutches of an Internet pedophile, Nina goes under cover to bust the criminal.

► **The Unspoken Truth:** A battered wife in jail for her husband's crime. Inspired by the true story!

By now you probably get the picture — and can't wait to turn it off. *The Naked Truth* is more than one of the top-rated shows in the new fall season: It's also the harsh reality that sleaze sells. To the people who bilge-pump profanity, violence and adult themes into American living rooms, the only morality is money.

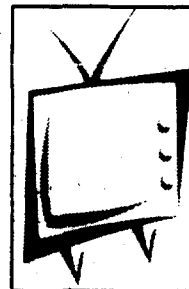
Look around the dial:

Movies now come to TV virtually uncut and uncensored, complete with all their original gore and offensive language. Change the channel.

The network news looks like reruns of the trash-tabloid versions. A report by *USA Today* found that during a 38-week period, evening newscasts on NBC, CBS and ABC devoted 1,392 minutes to O.J. Simpson, but only 762 to Bosnia and 530

to the Oklahoma City bombing. Change the channel.

The Simpsons has made a joke of missing children by featuring John Walsh, who started the missing children crusade after his son Adam disappeared. Very funny. Change the channel.



On broadcasts of pro football and other sports, sideline microphones pick up foul-mouthed tantrums from coaches, players and fans. Change the channel.

Try *Home Improvement*, one of the few shows left that children can watch — carefully. But first you have

to sit through jokes on *Newsradio* that would make Redd Foxx blush.

The good news — we hope — is that many more families are not sitting still for it. Early reports showed a surprising ratings dip for the new fall season.

That might be caused by viewers turning to tamer stuff — such as the O.J. trial.

But wouldn't it be nice if ratings continued to slide? That's the only thing that will send Hollywood a message in cash.

Dan Quayle tried. Nobody was home.

Bill Clinton tried. Busy signal.

Bob Dole tried. Disconnected.

This year, programs that are shamelessly trying to out-shock the puerile, pandering Fox Network have turned prime time into a tedious two-hours of rib-jabbing, cursing, leering sex and mindless violence.

An evening at home watching television used to be a family affair. Not anymore. Now even a half-hour is like being held hostage in the living room of the crude, lewd and rude Bundys on *Married . . . with Children*.

And it will stay that way until the people riding the Hollywood Wheel of Fortune buy a vowel and find out their television trash is a big turn-off to *Families . . . with Standards*.

95100401

PAUL L GOMORY
5609 Ogden Road
Bethesda, MD 20816-3325
301-320-4327
Fax 301-320-4327

ABC

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

FCC Secretary
1919 M Street N W
Washington D C 20554

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

Dear Folks

The enclosed National Education Association advertisement is on the right track! It simply misses a constructive solution to aid the advertizers of America to make money by behaving rationally for the good of our children.

Let's teach our children in the home and elsewhere (schools, churches, etc) the beauty, preciousness and consequent value to them of their healthy bodies by gradually inculcating in them the pros and cons of the decisions they and they alone will make as they grow up.

From childhood on - 5 years of age - we taught our daughter and son, now 52 and 47, both successful persons, married and professional, excellent students, about the most beautiful endowment of nature, that is, human sexuality, that it is precious and worth careful, reasoned use.

We never locked the bedroom door. If they entered the room and quite naturally snuggled to us we enfolded them no matter what was our condition in which they found us. They learned the beauty in the warm embrace of their loving parents.

At 14 each was sat at the head of the table and it was explained to them that they had made their own decisions for some time and that henceforth we would out of prudence retain a veto right until 16 and that we would not speak up unless asked to do so on any subject.

Assault and battery were abhorred and related to be a weakness. Self defense if reasonably possible was approved. In an extreme case it was the only thing to do, with gusto.

The enclosed from Washington Post Magazine is gut-curdling. It is symptomatic of the decadence of our cultured civilization.

Let us find the way to expanding the work of the good parenting folks and teach the sacredness of the human animal and its functions.

Respectfully submitted

Paul L. Gomory
10-22-95

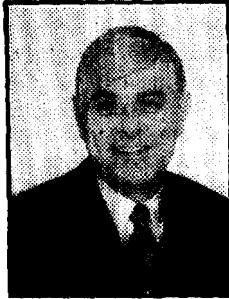
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OCT 24 1995

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OCT 11 3 22 PM '95

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Fed Up With All The TV Trash?



Keith Geiger
President, NEA

Let's Make The Tube Morally Fit For Our Kids

There once was a time in America when adults conspired, quietly and compassionately, to shield children from mindless violence and premature exposure to sex. Parents of

course were at the heart of this great adult conspiracy, but it extended well beyond them to include extended family members and friends, neighbors, and strangers who just happened by.

People who had never laid eyes on a child psychology book understood that for a child to grow up healthy and whole there were certain things he or she should never see, hear, or experience. And it was also understood that parents needed help in keeping an eye on their kids. Protecting the innocence of children was, in a real sense, everyone's job in a community.

To fully grasp how far we've slipped since that time, you need only sit down with the average preschooler some Saturday morning and watch the shows beamed to him or her over the public airwaves: Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, Mighty Morphin Power Rangers, Super Samurai Syber Squad—the names speak for themselves. Or join one of the millions of latchkey children in America who returns after school to an empty home and clicks on afternoon television, the way kids do. You and the schoolchild can witness a program about a 13-year-old girl who has slept with 20 men and a 17-year-old who has slept with more than a hundred men—both girls carried beepers; a program about "Dad by Day, Cross-Dresser by Night" or about white supremacists who hate African-Americans and Mexicans. Or you can watch the Geto Boys rapping about brutalizing women.

Veteran teachers will tell you that kids have changed over the past 30 years or so. They are more profane, more violence prone, and more sexually precocious. Is it any wonder? American children watch 28 hours of TV a week. More than 90 percent of programs during children's prime viewing hours are violent. Every year, the average American child watches more than 1,000 rapes, murders, armed robberies, and assaults, and the average American teenager views 14,000 TV references to sex.

Of course fractured families and fragmented

communities also play a huge role in the lives of America's children. But the increasing violence and sexual precociousness of today's children cannot be explained in the absence of television. The hypnotic eye

of TV is simply too powerful to dismiss.

In a perfect world, no American child would be left alone for long periods with only television for companionship. In a perfect world, every parent would be responsible, every parent would have the time and financial resources to control his or her child's TV viewing, and every parent would be as vigilant as one producer who won't allow his own children to see the shows he has produced.

But children don't grow up in a perfect world, and it's truly astonishing how permissive we have been as a society with broadcasters and advertisers. This is not an issue of free speech versus government censorship. This is a public interest issue about how best to serve the needs of children and how to use the wonderful opportunities presented by the information age to enrich their lives.

Children are more than little consumer units—they are living, breathing human beings with tender souls. The fierce competition of the marketplace blinds broadcasters to this all-important truth.

Every television sold in America should come equipped with a V-chip, a computer chip that parents can program to block out violent shows. And while we're at it, every TV set should come with an S-chip too, to block out the smut.

Every broadcaster should be required to develop a Contract for Kids and Community, spelling out in concrete detail how it intends to give parents a choice of nonviolent, decent, and educational programming. Then the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) could base its license renewal decision on whether the broadcaster has lived up to the agreement.

In addition, we can put some teeth into the Children's Television Act of 1990, by requiring every television station to air at least one hour of educational programming for children every day between 7 a.m. and 10 p.m. Citizens can express their views to the FCC via E-Mail to ldstve@fcc.gov, or by writing Secretary, FCC, 1919 M Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

We need a public ready to rise up and say, "Enough"—as it did recently against the decadent Calvin Klein print ads that displayed child-like models in various stages of undress.

Enough.

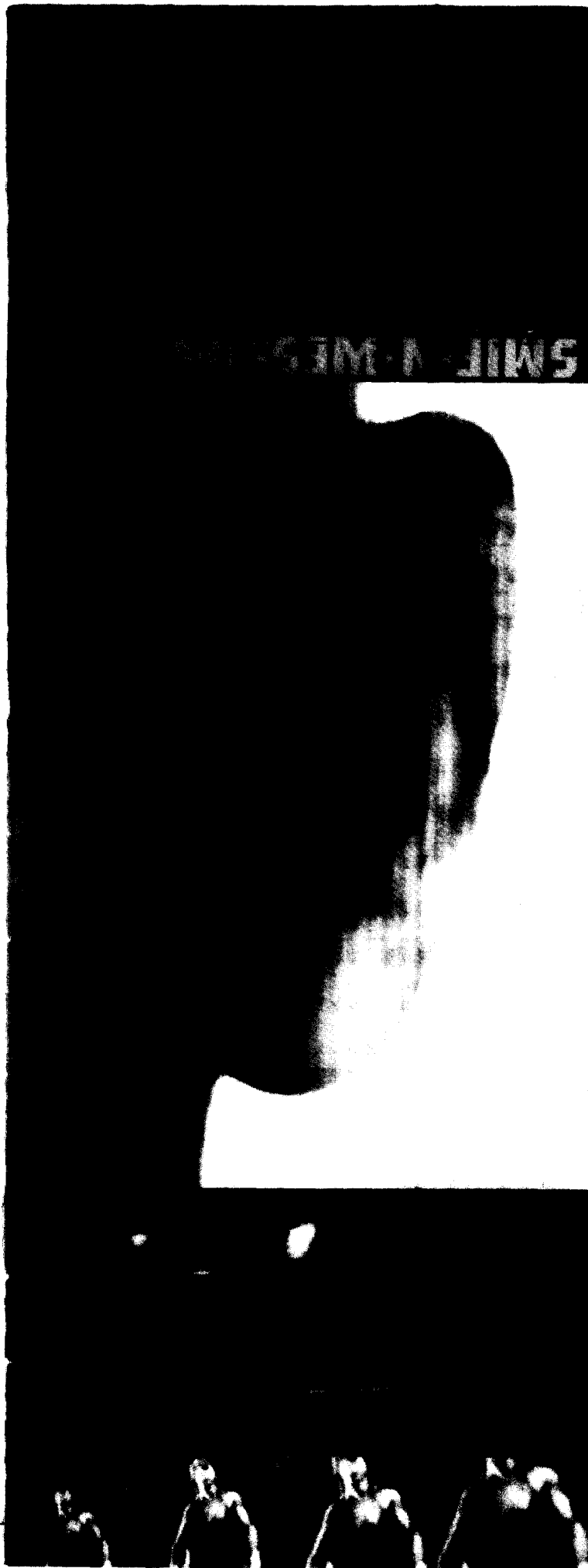
Cocaine
Crack
Heroin
Acid
Crystal
Green
Speed
LSD

WOLU

DA DOGH
CINATION
ET HOME
MOUE
GIP

IF YOU CAN
THIS + HOLD DOWN
YOUR BREAKFAST, YOU'LL
DO BETTER THAN I COULD,
DAN GOMAN
BENJAMIN
WE HAD TWO SILENT
CHILDREN, TRAVEL THEM THE
PROST CASE - "DESIKIMIS GOMAN"





Too Much? Too Soon?

Aaron Wolf loves violent video games and gangsta rap. To the producers, he is the marketplace. To the anti-popular-culture crusaders, he's a victim. To his parents, he's a good kid, doing fine—and someone who needs to make his own choices in the world **By David Finkel**

To be 14. So much to learn. So many choices. So much to do:

Aaron Wolf, at the moment, is choosing to watch TV. He's in Silver Spring, in his house, in the den, in a recliner, with a remote in one hand and a microwave burrito in the other. On the screen, some women are rubbing their chests. "This is Shaggy. 'Boombastic,'" he says. "It's pretty good." He watches for a few seconds,

grows bored, clicks the remote. On comes VH-1. "Janet Jackson. 'You Want This,'" he says. "I don't like Janet Jackson." He clicks the remote again. "Nickelodeon." Click. "The country station." Click. "Bette Midler?" Click. "O.J." Click. Jenny Jones, talking to a pregnant 15-year-old. "I like Ricki Lake." Click. Click-click-click. Back to MTV. "Jodeci," he says. "'Every freek'n night, every freek'n day, I wanna freek you, every freek'n way' . . . I hate this group." Click. "I'm screwed. Nothing's on."

Now he's at a video arcade, playing a fighting game called *Mortal Kombat*. He mashes a row of buttons, and his fighter kicks the other fighter in the head. He mashes the buttons some more, and his fighter keeps kicking as blood drops fly across the screen. "Finish him!" a computer-generated voice commands. He mashes the buttons again, and his fighter reaches into the mouth of the other fighter, roots around and pulls out his skeleton. "Fatality," announces the voice. So much for that.

Now he's back at his house, playing the home version of *Mortal Kombat* against his older brother, Nick. He has stalked Nick's character. He has punched him repeatedly. "Finish him!" says the voice. Time for the uppercut. Nick's character goes flying upward, off the screen, and comes raining back down in pieces. There's an arm. There's the torso. "There's the head," Nick says, watching it bounce.

Now he's signed on to America Online, in an area called Rabbit Jack's Casino, playing poker against a few other people, strangers all, who are also signed on. Here come the cards. He wins. Here comes a message from one of the other players. "Eat this," it says.

He has a good face. He has a nice smile. He has a direct, unapologetic gaze.

TO BE 14 IS TO BE a work in progress, and that's what Aaron Wolf is.

Physically, he's big for his age: 5-foot-10, 145 pounds, size 11 shoe. Mentally, he's smarter than average: He spent seventh and eighth grades in a magnet school for students gifted in math and science. But otherwise, to see Aaron in a mall, or in an arcade, or in the recliner, or anywhere, is to see someone who might be any 14-year-old, especially one whose back yard is a neat suburban patch of lawn. He wears the same cap, baggy Levis, XXL Stussy shirt, and high-top Nikes as every other 14-year-old boy. He swims. He bowls. He's interested in girls. He likes baseball. He gets good grades. In every way, he seems to be doing well enough as he comes of age, except he is doing so now, in 1995, a time when every aspect of popular culture seems awash in violence and explicitness, and there's increasing debate over what the effects of this will ultimately be. Are we becoming more violent? Debased? Desensitized? Is American society in the midst of a moral decline? These are the questions of the moment, and there's Aaron, at the very age most vulnerable to the sway of popular culture, in the middle of it all.

To those for whom popular culture has become a moral crusade, he's a victim.

To those who see it as a business worth billions of dollars, he's the marketplace.

To his parents, he's a child to be proud of, doing fine so far.



Now he's turning on the stereo and putting on one of his favorite CDs:

"I knew the girl was ready . . .

"She started getting sweaty . . .

"But all was in my head was kill that bitch like Freddy . . ."

Now he's talking about movies, about how much he likes them and about some of the things he's seen in them, such as shootings: "I've seen someone up close get shot in the head. I've seen just about any kind. I haven't seen anybody get shot in the eye. I've seen somebody do this"—he puts a finger in his mouth and pretends to pull a trigger—"and you see blood come out the back of the head. I've seen people shot in the leg, shot in the back."

And stabbings: "In the back. In the stomach. Slice their neck. Scar their face. I don't think I've seen eyes gouged out. I've seen after, but I didn't see the process. I saw someone slit their wrists for a suicide."

And sex: "Oh I've seen a lot of that. I've seen people where, like, they choke the other person in the process . . . I've seen someone stabbed, I guess, in the process . . . I've seen just about everything. I haven't seen men and men. I have seen women and women. I've seen a threesome."

And now he's back in the recliner, back in front of the TV, this time with a bowl of Cheerios and a slice of chocolate cake, talking about the common theme of his days.

"I like violence," he says.

He elaborates:

"I like seeing violence."

And elaborates further:

"I just really like watching violence."

All, in their own way, have an interest in Aaron. They want to know what he's thinking, what he's doing, what he's feeling, how he's developing, because, in theory, to know Aaron is to perhaps know a thing or two about where we're headed.

As for Aaron himself, he, at the moment, is headed no farther than up the stairs of a medium-sized house in a middle-class neighborhood. "Here's my room," he says at the top, motioning to the left. His brother's room is to the right. His parents' room is downstairs. They rarely venture upstairs, rarely go into either boy's room. Nick's door is open, Aaron's is shut. He twists the knob, and the door opens a few inches. He pushes against it, and it opens a few inches more. He pushes against it with one of his feet, and it opens far enough for him to squeeze in, and then, whatever is on the far side of the door begins to push it closed.

It turns out to be piles of clothes. And sheets. And swim flippers, a chair on its side, soda cans, dishes and plastic bags of trash, so much stuff that it is impossible to tell whether the floor is carpeted or bare wood. Aaron makes his way to his bed, sits on a corner, looks down at his feet, and is surprised to see that on the top of his right foot is a lengthening trickle of blood. It must have happened when he was pushing against the door. Or when he was plowing his way through one of the piles, maybe he hit a soda can. Whatever, he ignores it and points out a few things: the desk at the far end, the stereo, the TV, the VCR, the Nintendo system. The Nintendo is one of four game systems in the house. The TV is hooked up to cable, including all the premium movie channels. The stereo system has a five-disc CD player. Now he shows off his CDs, which are mostly rap, with an emphasis on gangsta rap, one of which he decides to play. He gets up, scuffs his way through the clothing,

turns on the stereo, comes back, sits down, listens to the music, nods his head, taps his foot, looks down, and sees that somewhere during the journey between the bed and the stereo, the trickle of blood has been wiped away. He keeps the sound at a moderate level. Not that his parents would say anything if it was loud. They mostly leave him alone, trusting him to do the right thing. There are no limits on what he can listen to, no limits on what he can watch. If it's midnight, and he can't sleep, and he wants to watch "Leprechaun 2," the movie that showed him what it's like when someone's puckered lips touch the whirling metal blades of a fan, he can do that. If he wants to go to an R-rated movie, he can do that, too: In his wallet is a card, approved by his parents and issued by one of the movie theater chains, that says he can go to any R-rated movie he wants, with or without an adult.

None of this is because Aaron's parents are uninvolved in his life, but precisely the opposite. When he was little, they took him to museums and read to him at night; when he was 9, they told him he couldn't have a Nintendo system until he was 10; when he was 12, they told him he couldn't see horror movies until he was 13. Once he hit 13, however, they decided he was mature enough to make his own decisions about these kinds of things, and that limiting his choices from then on wouldn't be guidance, but censorship.

"I don't want to cut anything off from him," says his mother, Lynne, 45, who works out of the house doing transcription for medical practices so she can be home in the mornings, and afternoons, and whenever else might be necessary, for her sons. "I want him to experience everything he can experience."

"I don't believe people should be sheltered, because if you're always sheltered as you're learning your thought processes, how do you deal with the world?" says his father, Bryan, 49, a manager with a defense contractor. "He knows: 'If I can conceive of the extremes, then I know there's a place in the middle where there's balance.'"

Or so is the hope. They don't know if he knows this for sure, can't know. It's too early. At this point, all they can be sure of is that the world Aaron is coming of age in is far different than the one they inhabited when they were 14.

For Bryan, that was in 1960, when he was in New York City, attending a yeshiva. There was no TV in his life, no music, and only an occasional movie. Days were devoted to prayer and study, and nights were spent taking long walks around Queens with an older rabbinical student who would argue with Bryan about philosophy, about the existence of God, about evolution, about fairness. For him, 14 was an essential year in his intellectual development, and much of the reason why, years later, when he was living in Germany and visited the remains of some of the concentration camps, he decided that any limitation

of information is censorship, and that he would never inflict that on his children.

Lynne, meanwhile, turned 14 in 1964, when she was living in California. "You want to know what I was trying to do? I was trying to survive," she says. "Two years before, my sister had died, and what was left of my family after that was disintegrating. My parents were alcoholics, and this made it worse, and it was the defining event of my adolescence: Any semblance of family life we'd had fell apart." For



John Tobias, the co-creator of *Mortal Kombat*, has watched the much-criticized game generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue from youthful customers. "They're adamant about having violent, gory fatalities," he says. "That's what they want."

her, 14 was a tailspin, which is much of the reason why, earlier this year, when she saw Bob Dole on CNN and, as she describes it, "they were interviewing him about the morality of youth today, and he was saying with all the videos and movies coming at kids there's moral confusion, I was saying, 'Oh, please.' The confusion comes from kids not having someone to come home to, or give them a bowl of cereal in the morning, or hug them when they've had a bad day."

Out of their own experiences, then, both Bryan and Lynne decided that Aaron, at 14, was mature enough, and felt loved enough, to be able to make his own decisions, even if that means listening again and again to the song that is now playing in his room, which includes the line, "I dug between the chair, and pulled out the machete, she screamed, I sliced her up until her guts were like spaghetti."

"I don't mind him listening. I do mind the lyrics," Bryan says.

fident that Aaron, at 14, has enough solid values in place to carry him past such lyrics, Lynne talks to him constantly, trying to add some perspective.

"When we listen to the car radio," she says, "and they say, 'We're gonna do it, do it, do it, all night long,' or, 'We're gonna yo yo yo with your ho ho ho,' I say, 'What are they doing, Aaron?' He says, 'They're having sex, Mom.' And I say, 'Are they using protection?' He says, 'I don't know.' I say, 'Why do they have to do it, do it, do it?'"

Why can't they do it and have a conversation?" I try to say things to make him think about all of this. Most of the time, what he says is, 'Mom, I don't even listen to the lyrics.' But the thing is, if I can hear them, how can't he?"

So it is that on the way to the video store one day, when the song on the radio says, "I want to be your sexual chocolate," she says to Aaron, "I want to be your sexual chocolate? What does that mean?" And when another song says, "Yeah, baby, I like it raw," she says, "What does he like raw? Is it life? Is it sex? What is he saying?"

Aaron, in turn, shrugs. Maybe he's listening, maybe he isn't. Into the store they go, and he begins searching while Lynne, standing away from him, thinking about what she would have been doing on an idle day when she was his age, says, "The only thing we had in my little town was, do you remember Andrew Carnegie? Who would go around and build libraries in little towns where they didn't have one? Well, we had a Carnegie library. And a big afternoon was you'd ride your bike to the country store and buy a Coca-Cola and a Twinkie, and you'd ride to the creek with your Twinkie and Coke and two library books and spend the afternoon. And now, to stand here and look at all the choices Aaron has, it's kind of overwhelming."

Patiently, she waits. He keeps looking. He goes through the movie titles. He moves on to the video game section. It takes him 15 minutes, but at last he makes a selection.

"Jeopardy," he says, handing it to her.

"Jeopardy?" she says.

"Yeah," he says.

"Fine with me," she says, surprised.

They get in the car. He turns on the radio. She'd rather hear oldies, or opera, or Bruce Springsteen, but, as

always, she lets him put on what he wants.

"Who's this?"

"This," he says, "is Ol' Dirty Bastard."

HE PLAYS JEOPARDY ONCE. He plays it twice. He gets bored. So long, Jeopardy. Now he puts on Mortal Kombat, which he never gets tired of. Once, he played for four hours without stopping.



Aaron Wolf, with cap, plays *Mortal Kombat II* with his older brother, Nick.

"If I hadn't seen anything violent, I probably wouldn't be who I am, and I probably wouldn't have much of a life," Aaron says. "I wouldn't be able to relate to anybody else."

"We both mind the lyrics, and he knows it," Lynne says.

"But how will he know what something is *unless* he listens to it?" Bryan says.

Of the two, Lynne is slightly less certain about all of this than Bryan. "Ninety percent of me is comfortable with this, but 10 percent of me has Jeffrey Dahmer lurking in the background," she says one day. She is joking, of course, but unlike Bryan, who is con-

"All right, we're starting our game," he says, explaining what he's doing as he presses various buttons on his controller. First he has to decide which of a dozen characters he wants to be. "I'm choosing Jax because he's fun to use, and I like one of his moves where he pounds you to bits," he says. Now he begins stalking, kicking, and punching the opposing fighter. "Right now I'm staying my space . . . Now I'm jumping at him . . . Now I'm trying to trap him in the corner . . . Now I got him. No I don't. Yeah I do. There!" The other character crumples. He wins. But he's disappointed. "I was going to do a pit move. I was going to knock him into the acid. But I was unsuccessful."

So he tries again, again, again.

He pulls his opponent's arms out of their sockets.

He becomes a female who kisses her opponent, stands back and watches him explode.

He becomes metal blades that chop off the opponent's head.

He freezes his opponent, hits him and turns him into flying shards.

He does an uppercut that causes his opponent to fall off a bridge and keep falling until he hits concrete and his head splits open.

He becomes Jax again.

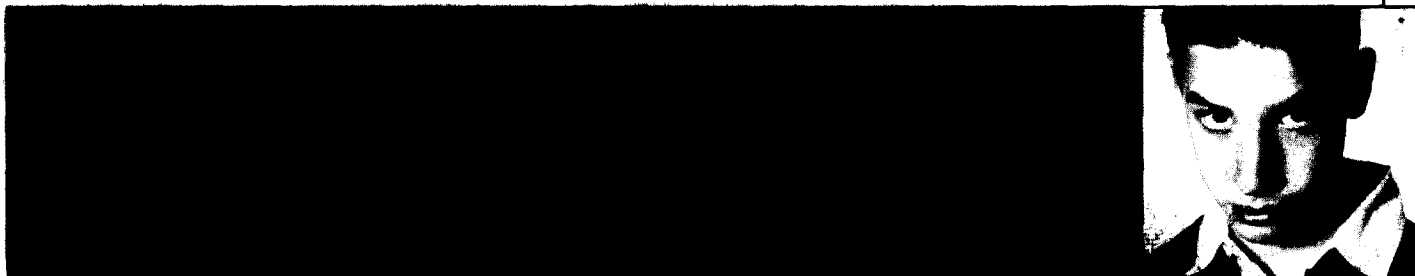
"Finish him!" comes the command.

This time he does it right. It isn't the pit move, it's one he likes even better. He stretches Jax's arms out to the side and brings them together as if clanging cymbals, but there are no cymbals here, just two fists and an opponent's head that is in the way. Boom! The head is crushed, and Aaron laughs. "It's the best one."

thinking was that it would be popular, but no one in their wildest dreams expected it would gross \$800 million its first year in the arcades. Likewise, the hope was that the movie also would do well, but \$30 million? In one week? The No. 1 movie in the country? "Pac-Man was a phenomenon, the best-selling game of all time," he says, searching for a comparison. "Pac-Man and Ms. Pac-Man together sold over 200,000 [arcade] units, plus apparel, and cereal, and 'Pac-Man Fever'—it was a hit single—but has there been anything of this enormity? Across the board? Like this? No."

"Thirty-two million," says John Tobias, the co-creator of *Mortal Kombat*, the next day, as he sits in an office crowded with a drawing table, a computer and piles of the latest *Mortal Kombat* products, including Halloween costumes. Tobias, a 26-year-old artist, first came up with the idea for *Mortal Kombat* in 1991, and four years later, he seems as amazed by what has happened as anyone else.

The point, he says, was merely to design a new game. He was finishing up a game called *Total Carnage*, which was a sequel to a game called *Smash TV*. At the same time, Ed Boon, a programmer, was finishing a game called *High Impact Football*. Both wanted to do a martial arts game. Neither had anything specific in mind at first, but gradually the game developed through a series of decisions: that it should be a side-view game rather than revolving 3-D, that the characters should be a certain size on the screen, that the impact of a kick should make a certain sound, that a foot or a fist should move at a particular speed, that it should be based on digitized images of actual actors rather than cartoonish figures, that



All of these moves are secret moves, not part of the general instructions, not known to the casual player. Rather, Aaron has learned them from scanning the Internet, and, in some cases, from reading a glossy monthly magazine Nick gets called *GamePro*, which shows how to perform moves such as the "head inflation," the "skull rip" and the "death scream." And this is where the marketplace implications of Aaron's choices begin to emerge.

The cost of *GamePro*: \$19.97 a year.

The cost of the home version of *Mortal Kombat*, which he and Nick got as soon as it came out: \$60.

The cost of *Mortal Kombat*'s successor, *Mortal Kombat II*, which he and Nick also got as soon as it came out: \$60 again.

The cost at the arcade, where they go at least once a week to play the latest version of the game, *Mortal Kombat 3*: 50 cents to play until you lose, which can add up quickly, even for a good player. Aaron imagines he easily spends more than \$100 a year at the arcade; three years after the first version of the game was released, that's how much pull it continues to have. He plays it constantly, and he, of course, is just one player in a universe that Roger Sharpe, director of licensing for Midway Manufacturing Co. in Chicago, where *Mortal Kombat* was invented, says includes 60,000 arcade machines, more than 10 million copies of the home versions, and 60 licensed spinoff products from posters, to calendars, to lunch boxes, to clothing, to a live-action road show, to a feature-length movie that, a week after its premiere, has people at Midway feeling a little giddy. "How are we doing?" Sharpe says into his phone, getting the daily update. "Outstanding . . . I love it!" He hangs up. "God, we're over \$30 million already. I love it."

When *Mortal Kombat* was first introduced, Sharpe says, the

there should be flying drops of blood. The goal was realism, Tobias says, and early on they knew they were onto something. "I believe it was when we put the uppercut in, and the other character went flying in the air. It really felt like he had hit someone," he says. "There was a generic sound in there, and it all seemed good."

But not great. Something, they decided, was missing at the end of the game. "There was this awkward moment where the other character is standing around dazed, and then you hit him again, and that was it. It seemed anticlimactic. We wanted every ending to seem like, *boom*. If you win, you should get a reward for winning," he says, which is how they came up with the idea of finishing moves, or fatalities, something that is common in games now, but, at that point, hadn't been done.

By the time they first tested the game at a Chicago arcade in early 1992, they had come up with only one. They were sure no player would discover it. It was too well hidden. It required pushing the buttons on the control panel in too complicated a sequence for someone to stumble upon. There were no hints on the Internet or in the gaming magazines, and the machine they wheeled into the arcade on a Friday night came with no instructions to help a player figure anything out about the game, much less a fatality. The machine didn't even have any kind of design on it or decals, just a hand-lettered sign. But that was enough to get kids lined up to play, and before the weekend was out they had of course found the fatality, and the oohs and aahs were so wonderful, Tobias says, that he and Boon went to work Monday knowing they had to think of more.

"What if he ripped his heart out and held it up? Wouldn't that be cool?" he says of the creative process that followed that first weekend. "What if you pull off his head and his spine is still attached? . . .

It was almost like Ed and I were trying to reduce ourselves to 15-year-old kids. That's what you have to do in this industry, think like a 15-year-old or 16-year-old game player."

In all, they thought of seven fatalities for the first version, 24 for the second, and 28 for the third, rejecting only one idea along the way that had one of the characters getting sliced in half by a sword, causing his guts to spill out. "We decided we didn't want to see anyone's guts," Tobias says about that. "If it makes us queasy, there's no way we want to push it. We already thought we were pushing it. Even we have our limits."

In spite of that, the game was, to put it mildly, controversial from the start. It was called disgusting. It was called damaging to children's psyches. It was accused by one U.S. senator, Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), of adding to America's "epidemic of real violence." It was the subject of a congressional hearing, which led to the wide use of a ratings system for home versions of video games, which led to Tobias and Boon adding something called friendship moves to the second version, moves in which, as Tobias describes them, instead of decapitating an opponent, "somebody would plant a flower, somebody would bake a cake, really stupid things." On and on this went, and meanwhile, between the arcade versions and home versions, *Mortal Kombat* was generating hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue and becoming the most popular game of its time. And in spite of the criticisms, the fatalities remained an essential part of the game because, as Tobias says of the players, "They're adamant about having violent, gory fatalities. That's what they want."

fought Scorpion? You know how he just blew up? He could have, like, uppercuted his head off or something like that."

"Or tore him in half," says Nick.

"Yeah," says Aaron. "And what they should have done at the end is, you know when Liu Kang pushed him? They should have done this fatality where he did a double kick and then uppercuted him. A cartwheel, and then, *bam*."

"So," says Bryan, "you liked it better than 'Apollo 13'?"

"Oh yeah," says Aaron.

"Why?" says Bryan.

"I like action," says Aaron. "I mean, what was 'Apollo 13'?"

"Drama?" says Nick.

"No," says Aaron. "More like . . ."

"History?" says Nick.

"No," says Aaron.

"Suspense?" says Nick.

"No," says Aaron. "It's, um . . ."

"Boring?" says Lynne.

"Yeah. Boring."

"So it doesn't have to make a lot of sense to you?" she says. "It doesn't have to challenge your mind at all?"

"I like watching them fight."

BACK HOME. AARON WATCHES ESPN, reads the Sports section, starts flipping through his CDs. "I can remember back when I was 6 or 7," he says. "I liked 'Born in the USA' by Bruce Springsteen;



Including Aaron. One other thing Tobias says about the game is, "I think the violence almost, after a while, becomes transparent. I mean, the fact that there's gobs of blood flowing out of somebody when you punch him, I don't think that that's the attraction any longer." Rather, he says, it's the fun of the game, the competition.

But to Aaron, it's the blood as much as anything else. Competition is Jeopardy, he says on the day that he has put Jeopardy aside after two plays, while in *Mortal Kombat*, which he has now been playing for almost an hour, "You can do a finish move, and it's like, yeah! Got you! And your opponent, like, dies."

So strong is the appeal of this that when the movie comes to Silver Spring, it plays in two theaters simultaneously. Aaron, of course, is there. He goes with the rest of his family, sitting, as they always do at movies, in the second row. It's where they sat for "Pulp Fiction," in which a guy in a car gets shot in the head and bits of his brain go flying about; it's where they sat for "Apollo 13," of which Aaron said afterward: "They went into space, they had their troubles, they came back, they made it. My parents thought it was non-stop action, but I must have missed it"; and it's where they sit now for two hours, watching one fight after another, until the last bad guy is impaled on a spike, and the credits fade, and the lights come up, and Lynne stands and says, "That's the second worst movie I've seen this summer."

"That was about exactly what I expected," says Bryan.

"I loved it," says Nick.

"I liked it," says Aaron. "But I think they should have made it rated R so they could show more stuff."

"So they could show *more* stuff?" says Bryan.

"Like they could show their fatalities. Like when Johnny Cage

and I liked the Beatles, like 'Twist and Shout'; I liked Yes back then; I think I liked Paula Abdul for a little bit, maybe when I was 9 or 10 or 8; I remember Def Leppard back when I was 8 or 9, 'Pour Some Sugar on Me,' that was heavy metal; and then I heard this song by Young MC called 'Bust a Move,' and then I started getting into rap, I started getting into Public Enemy, and LL Cool J, and then, from three years ago, it's been whatever's up. Whatever's playing."

What's playing now is the Geto Boys, a CD he got a few years ago when he first started listening to rap almost exclusively, one that contains a song called "Assassins," which is the song about slicing a woman "until her guts were like spaghetti." And goes on to say:

"A maniac, I stabbed the girl in the tits.

"And to stop her nerves from jumping, I just cut her to bits.

"And I'm an assassin . . ."

The song is one of Aaron's favorites. "I like the way they rap," he says of the song's appeal. "I really don't care about what they say. That doesn't bother me. I don't pay attention." Maybe so, but he does know most of the words, including the line about the girl being stabbed in her breasts, which is so graphic that it can't help but create an image in his mind. "I see [someone being] stabbed," he says of what that image is. Anyone in particular? "I don't have a face." Does he see breasts? "Yeah." Does he see a knife? "I see a machete." Does he see anything else? Blood? The machete actually embedded? The machete being drawn out? "I don't know," he says. "I don't pay attention." It's just an image, he says, no big deal, no dire consequences, one that quickly fades as the song moves on:

"My father was a priest, cold-blooded, he's dead, hypocrite, I caught him basing, so I shot him in the head . . ."

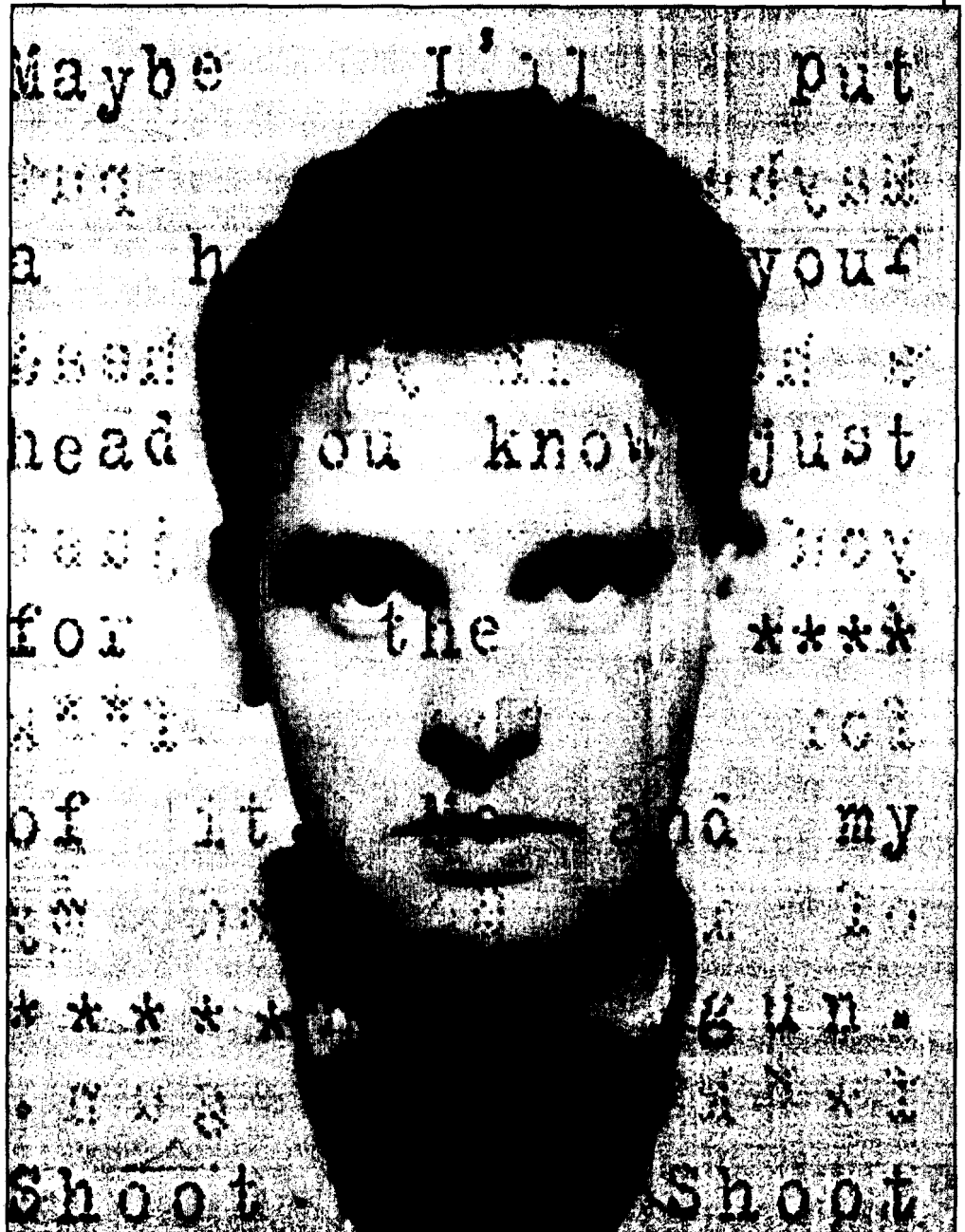
Like a dozen other CDs Aaron owns, this one has a label on the

cover that says, "Parental Advisory—Explicit Lyrics." It's there because of a long-ago battle, brought on in 1985 by Tipper Gore and several other wives of politicians, who were so bothered by certain lyrics that they formed the Parents' Music Resource Center and got record companies to start putting warning labels on music most likely to be considered offensive. Aaron, who was 4 years old when this began, knows little about it. He knows about the stickers but ignores them. He's heard of Al Gore, but he hasn't heard of Tipper. Neither has he heard of the PMRC and its current head, Barbara Wyatt. Nor has he heard of William Bennett, former secretary of education and current head of Empower America, or C. Delores Tucker, head of the National Political Congress of Black Women, whom Wyatt got to join forces earlier this year for an attack on Time Warner over some of the music it had been distributing. And neither has he heard of David Chamberlin, who, when all of this was beginning in the mid-1980s, was a 14-year-old himself, living in Ohio and listening to Van Halen, and 10 years later found himself sitting across from Wyatt at the Stage Deli in Manhattan, scribbling some notes on a napkin. He wrote down: Nine Inch Nails. He wrote down: Red Hot Chili Peppers. He wrote down: Slayer. He also wrote down a few song titles and lyrics and gave the napkin to Wyatt, who hurried from the deli to a Time Warner stockholders meeting, where she passed the information to Tucker and Bennett to use in their attack.

"Every day of my life, I listen to music," Aaron says. "Everywhere I go, there's music"—and so it is for David Chamberlin. "I love music," he says. "You'll never come into my office and not hear music unless the CD runs out and I'm on the phone." But while Aaron spends his days consuming it, Chamberlin, who moved to Washington last October and first met Wyatt in April, has begun helping in the crusade against what he considers its most extreme forms, largely because of the role music played in his life when he was growing up.

This goes back to Ohio, when he was living in the suburbs, in a house with a pool, and 2½ acres of woods, and his own room with posters on the walls of astronauts and baseball players, and parents whose marriage was falling slowly apart. When they were home, he says, they were often fighting, and when they weren't home there was a lingering tension, and either way he spent a lot of time in his room, door shut, volume up, listening to music: Van Halen, Bon Jovi, the Scorpions, Hanoi Rocks. All of it helped, he says, especially, for a brief time, Twisted Sister, whose song "We're Not Going to Take It" filled him with a kind of defiant hope that he would one day get away. Which is what happened. He went off to college, to a small, Christian, lib-

eral arts school in Indiana, where he arrived hoping not only for an education, but for escape. Except his parents' marriage was growing worse; and his high school girlfriend was calling him every week, every day, every hour, wanting to know what was happening to their relationship; and school was hard; and living alone was difficult; and the music he was listening to at that point wasn't so much about defiance as alienation; and one night he went for a walk, in the dark, with a knife, wondering whether to commit suicide, fairly



David Chamberlin, a rock music lover whose "favorite group in the whole wide world" is U2, has helped establish a 900 number that parents can call to get information about the violent, sexually explicit song lyrics their children are listening to.

certain he would. That night, he says, was the beginning of a realization that came to him more fully years later, that some of the music he was listening to, while certainly not the cause of his despair, helped to exaggerate it. The music, he says, "gave me clarity because there was a lot of stuff I was feeling that I couldn't put into words, emotions of hurt, of anger, of anxiety, and these guys captured that. After a while, though, it increased continued on page 24

'You Can Own the World'

On June 15, 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized the CIA to launch an operation code-named PBSUCCESS, an attempt to overthrow the communist-leaning, reform-minded government of the small Central American nation of Guatemala. "I want you all to be damn good and sure you succeed," the president told his CIA director, Allen Dulles. "When you commit the flag, you commit it to win."

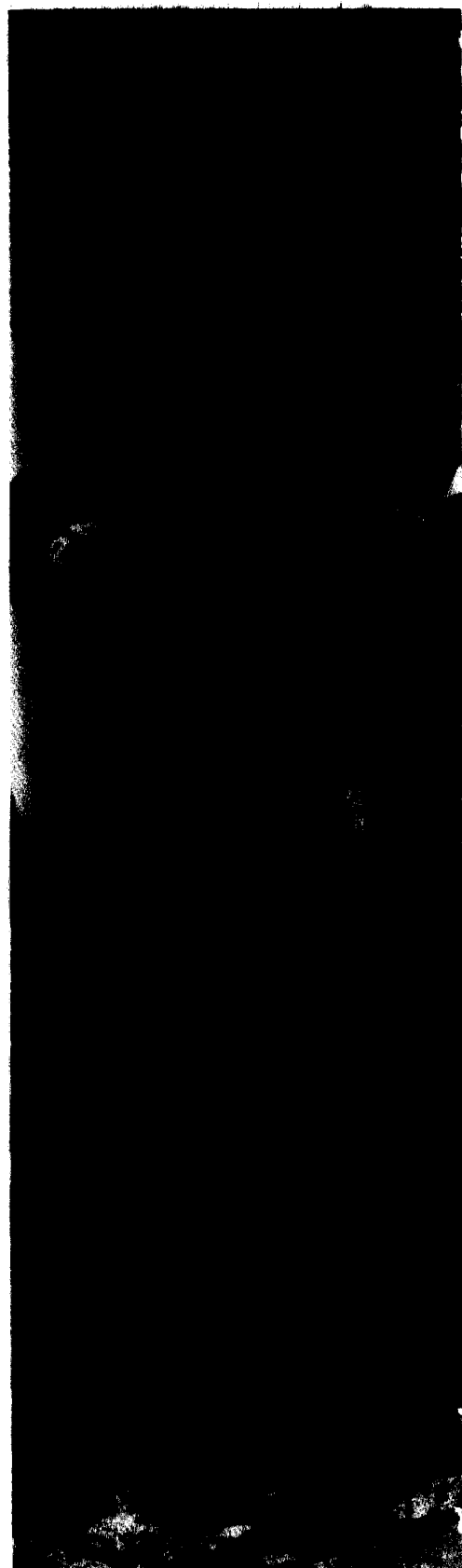
The CIA's "field" headquarters for the covert operation were on an abandoned Marine air base in Opa-Locka, Fla., in a suite of offices over a former nursery.

In the dusty old barracks, determined men moved swiftly, impressive maps and a 40-foot chart lined the walls, phones rang, telexes chattered. To Richard Bissell and Tracy Barnes, the Ivy League-



Last month, CIA Director John Deutch fired two spies for failing to report properly about human rights abuses in Guatemala. The scandal made headlines and provoked heated debate inside CIA headquarters. For old agency hands, it was a bittersweet reminder that there was a time, not so long ago, when a spy could do just about what he pleased in a little country like Guatemala...

**By Evan
Thomas**



In promoting the Guatemalan coup,

Noodle-Happy

OODLES NOODLES—1010 20TH ST. NW. 202-293-3138. *Open: for lunch Monday through Friday 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.; for dinner Monday through Saturday 5 to 10 p.m. Closed Sunday. AE, DC, MC, V. Reservations suggested at lunch. No smoking. Prices: appetizers \$2.50 to \$3.95, entrees \$5.95 to \$10.95. Full dinner with drinks, tax and tip \$15 to \$20 per person.*

I really didn't intend to go back to Oodles Noodles so many times. But it kept insinuating itself into my life.

After a homebound day, unwilling to dress up and not wanting to take a long time over dinner, I searched through my restaurant list, and Oodles Noodles struck me as exactly the right choice. It was. Another day the weather had turned cool after a hot spell, and I had a sudden yen for noodle soup. Oodles Noodles' carry-out served the purpose. One day

while running errands, I got hungry. But I didn't want a lunch that was long or heavy, just something simple at a quiet table where I could read the paper. Oodles suited the moment. And then there was the time I was running late at work, didn't have time to go out but had nothing substantial enough for dinner at home. I called Oodles Noodles, and 10 minutes after I entered my front door, a delivery man arrived with a hot and savory feast at well under \$10 a person. The portions were enormous and the food had been packaged cleverly, even to the point of separating the soup and its noodles so that the latter wouldn't become soggy.

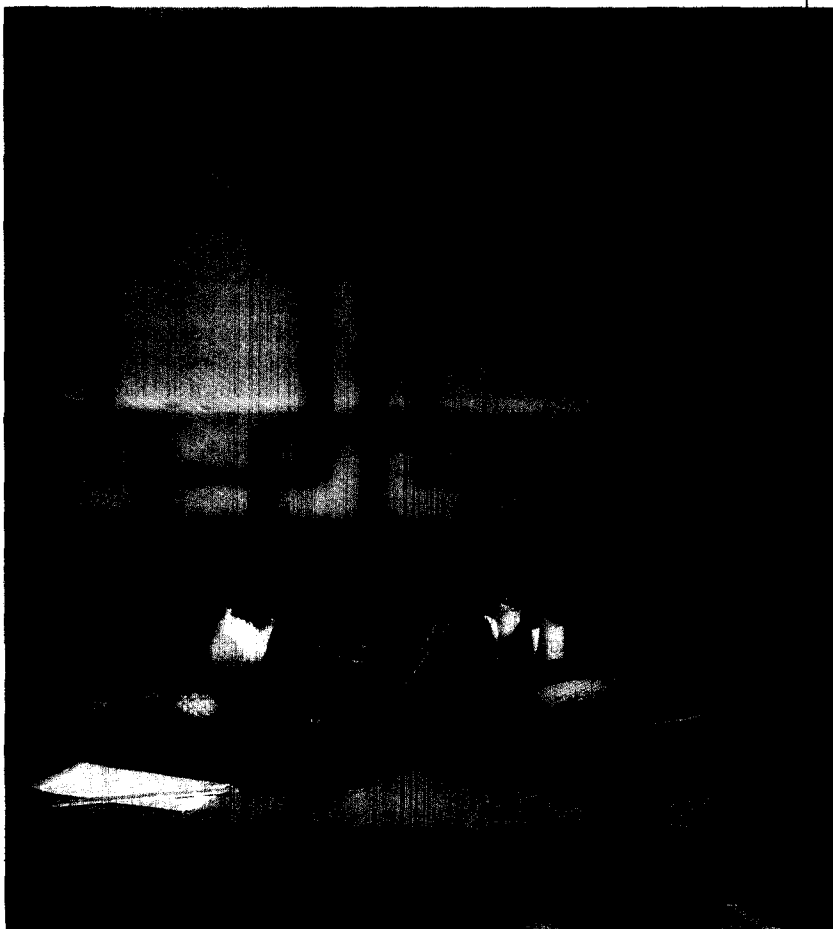
Noodles answer many questions, fill a multitude of needs. No wonder half a dozen chefs I know are talking about opening noodle parlors. Oodles Noodles is a spinoff of Spices, the pan-Asian restaurant on upper Connecticut Avenue. Oodles, too, is pan-Asian, though it concentrates more heavily on noodles and noodle soups. The menu also lists eight fried or grilled appetizers, several salads, half a dozen grilled entrees, a few rice dishes and even mu shi—served with a wonderfully vinegary variation on hoisin sauce.

The real variety here, however, is in the geographical reach. All of Asia is represented, with a heavy emphasis on Malaysian and Indonesian cooking. Spicy seafood noodles soup made with ramen noodles and bean paste, thus presumably Japanese—is as fiery as any Indonesian dish I've ever eaten. Thailand's drunken noodles—those fat rice-flour noodles topped with minced chicken, chilies and aromatic Thai

basil—is lighter and leaner than the Thai versions I've eaten.

Most of the appetizers are fried, and while they are as crisp and spicy as one might want, they tend to be greasy. Savory pancakes resemble extra-thin won-ton skins with ground beef inside. The whole thing is deep fried—delicious, though slick with oil. Even pan-fried Japanese dumplings ooze oil, though otherwise they are pleasant. The leanest of the appetizers is chicken satay, a mild rendition of the usual skewered meat with spiced peanut sauce.

Soups are Thai, Japanese and Vietnamese—the inevitable fragrant, long-simmered pho, rich with meat stock and packed with just-cooked thin-sliced beef. Salads tend to be enough for a tableful, especially the Indonesian gado-gado with its tangy peanut-and-chili sauce over raw vegetables, tofu and egg. It would have been more satisfying if it had the promised cooked vegetables—potatoes and green beans—though even without them it was better than other gado-gados I've found in the area.



An Asian feast from Indonesia, Malaysia and points north.



Penang asam laksa, a Malaysian fish soup.

Nevertheless, this restaurant is clearly about noodles. You can have them mild or peppery, dry or soupy. There are cold soba (Japanese buckwheat noodles) with tempura garnish and cold ramen topped with pork, shrimp and raw vegetables. Mostly, though, the noodles are hot. From Thailand, noodles are immersed in lemon-grass broth. From Shanghai, spaghetti-shaped pasta floats in clear broth with roast pork.

Tame stuff. You can find those elsewhere. What gets me salivating are a few dishes that I've found only at Oodles Noodles. Penang asam laksa is a Malaysian soup made from fish bones and herbs so exotic you wouldn't expect them to have names in English. It's spiked with a little hot pepper (additional pepper comes on the side) and tamarind, which gives it a tart tropical flavor. It's served steaming in a large tureen with "round noodles" (that spaghetti again) and slivers of raw vegetables—lettuce, cucumber and onion—which wilt slightly and add a sweet freshness. Many will find laksa too fishy and strange, but the adventurous few will love it. Hokkien shrimp noodles soup is slightly more mainstream, its clear pink broth tasting like liquid shrimp. It's chili-hot and piled with juicy little shrimp, fat and thin noodles, wilted watercress and bean sprouts, and fragrant crisply fried shallots.

Despite the restaurant's name, it does well by grilled dishes. Lemon chicken is two long skewers of boneless dark meat, puckery with lemon juice and mildly spiced. Like the satay, it could be juicier, but it's a terrific bargain at \$6.95 with carrot-cabbage slaw, hair-thin rice noodles and a thicket of pickled ginger. The same goes for the sweetly perfumed and peppered slices of spiced pork. For \$1 more, you can get luxurious grilled eel shrimp.

One rice dish is a standout. It's an Indonesian mini-buffet called nasi campur, a mound of rice accompanied by a small bowl of golden incendiary chicken curry, a pile of small shrimp in an even hotter thick red sauce, a halved egg, chunks of cucumber and a little mound of toothpick-size crisply fried anchovies and peanuts. Nibble them separately or let them mingle on the plate—either way, they turn your mouth into an amusement park. Clay pot chicken rice is a homey little meal that includes shiitakes, scallions, bean sprouts and a bit of ginger. Even with its drizzles of dark soy sauce, it seems a dish for people on bland diets.

There's ice cream for dessert. There's also an odd specialty of squiggly green bits of rice dough floating in sweetened coconut milk with ice. Various staff members warned me that Americans don't like it. They were right: At least I didn't.

I often was drawn into conversations with the staff. They're a friendly, helpful group who act as tour guides to the menu; they know the food so well that you expect to find out that they're members of the chef's family.

The dining room is a small hideaway—the walls are knotty pine, with backlit rice paper decorated with an elaborate geometry of wood strips. Little bouquets of flowers sit on the wood-edged laminated tables. Oodles Noodles looks like a sushi bar, jazzed up by fake roof tiles in fanciful deep-sea blue. It's a serene dining room, sometimes too much so—as when New Age music is playing and the place sounds like a yoga class.

Come to think of it, that's another reason to eat lunch at Oodles Noodles: I can meditate over a bowl of steaming fish noodle soup. ■

SOLUTION TO LAST WEEK'S PUZZLE

ALTER	PSHAW	SSR	PAY
BEHEAD	OHARA	TUE	IOTA
AXELMURDERER	ERS	RSVP	
TUNS	LOSES	ARARAT	
ERE	BUG	THEMODEL	SQUAD
WRITES	RAM	ATTIRED	
SLEIGHTOFHANDER	ARS		
COLD	MOISTEN	CHILL	
UNDO	FLICK	ARABEET	
BEEFBROTHER	ALLOWS		
ARA	ROTE	SAT	FAIL
ETE			
SLEETS	CAMELCORDER		
BAHAISM	RAISA	ODER	
GAWKY	SHUTSIN	MILO	
HUP	FLASHINTHEPANEL		
EROTICA	NIE	SAVING	
BUSHELWHACKER	LIN	VAS	
TYRONE	LODEM	BOLA	
PALM	REX	NOTLEY	CREWEL
GLEE	IRE	OBOES	EATERS
ALS	SSS	MINSK	YALTA

the anxiety. It kept me from getting past the issues and dealing with them ... You just wallow in it. 'Wow! Other people feel this way, too.'"

So it was that years later, after surviving that night, receiving his degree, moving to Washington, and getting a job at the Family Research Council, a conservative research and lobbying organization, he found himself in a meeting one day with Barbara Wyatt, telling her that he had been keeping files on certain musical trends, and lyrics, and groups for years, from those he liked, such as U2 ("my favorite group in the whole wide world"), to those he found disturbing, such as Nine Inch Nails. She, at that point, was casting about for ways to raise the profile of PMRC, and though she had been in touch with Bennett and Tucker, she didn't know enough about music specifically to be of maximum help. And here, suddenly, was someone who not only knew that there was a group called Nine Inch Nails, but that their music was industrial alternative, and that their latest album was recorded in the very house where the Manson killings occurred, and that one of the songs, "Closer," included the lyrics, "You let me violate you, desecrate you, complicate you, penetrate you. I want to [expletive] you like an animal."

That was in mid-April. A month later, the two of them were on their way to New York for the assault on the Time Warner stockholders' meeting, and, since then, Chamberlin says, he has been volunteering, on average, a dozen hours a week, helping the PMRC with its latest idea, a 900 number for parents to call to get information about what their children are listening to. The number, which has room for 85 short reviews and went into operation over the summer, is only one part of Wyatt's plans for the PMRC. She hopes to establish some kind of youth advisory board that would meet regularly and discuss the implications of music. She hopes to start some kind of annual awards show that would recognize music for being positive rather than destructive. "The repetition of certain types of music—I'm not talking about all music, I'm talking about the ones that preach violence, that preach illicit sex, that preach violence against women, that preach rape, that are filled with profanities—these, at the least, compel you to think about these things," she says. And so the 900 number, which is, in essence, Chamberlin.

He is the one who chooses what music to highlight by scanning the Billboard Top 100, reading music magazines, buying CDs, and playing them often enough in his office, his car, his home, to chronicle their profanities and themes. He is the one who writes